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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV UZ

SUBJECT: UMIDA NIYAZOVA OFFERED HRW JOB IN BISHKEK

REF: TASHKENT 927

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) During an Embassy function on October 18, former Human Rights Watch (HRW) local staffer and journalist Umida Niyazova told poloff that she supported post's nomination of her for the Secretary of State's 2008 Award for International Women of Courage (septel). Niyazova, who was sentenced to seven years imprisonment by a Tashkent court on politically-motivated charges in May and later released on three years probation (reftel), appeared to be in good spirits and provided poloff with a brief update on her condition.

HRW'S BERG IS NOW IN BISHKEK, HAS OFFERED JOB TO NIYAZOVA

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¶2. (C) Niyazova reported that former HRW Uzbekistan Country Director Andrea Berg is now working as a Senior Researcher for HRW in Bishkek and has offered Niyazova a job there. Niyazova told poloff that she has not accepted the offer, as she is worried about putting herself and her three-year old child in danger again (Note: Niyazova was arrested while trying to cross the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border in January. End note.) Niyazova also reported that her husband, a reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, remains in political asylum in the Czech Republic.

CONTINUES TO REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN UZBEKISTAN

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¶3. (C) Niyazova reported that she remains under curfew between 10 pm and 6 am each day and must report once a month to a local police station. Niyazova also has been warned not to write any articles or attempt to leave the country. Despite the government's warning, Niyazova said that she continues to anonymously write articles on human rights abuses in Uzbekistan for independent websites. She is not able to receive calls from abroad on her home phone or use internet at her apartment, although she is able to receive international calls on her mobile phone and can freely visit internet cafes.

¶4. (C) Other than the restrictions listed above, Niyazova reported that there are few other restrictions on her movement. She is able to travel freely during the day and has attended the Embassy's monthly press briefing for local journalist without repercussion. Niyazova was hopeful that she may be considered for Uzbekistan's next general amnesty,

reportedly planned for Uzbekistan's Constitution Day on December 8, and that she could then travel abroad freely again.

15. (C) Comment: Through her continued human rights reporting, Umida Niyazova demonstrates outstanding courage and we believe that she will make a strong candidate for the 2008 Women of Courage Award. Unless Niyazova is amnestied, though, it is unlikely that she will be able to travel to Washington next year if she is selected for the award.

NORLAND